What the UN Does

for peace...

The main purpose of the UN is to preserve world peace. In many instances, the UN has played an active part in reducing tensions, preventing conflicts, or putting an end to fighting when wars have broken out in various parts of the world. It has helped to resolve dangerous disputes between nations, with the consent of the Governments concerned.

The means are varied: a Security Council decision ordering a cease-fire and setting up machinery to settle the underlying dispute... a compromise worked out by a mediator... quiet diplomatic contacts in the corridors or through the good offices of the Secretary-General... organization of peace-keeping forces or observer missions.

After the October 1973 hostilities in the Middle East, a UN Emergency Force was sent to the area to help peace efforts. UNEF soldiers patrolled the buffer zone between Egyptian and Israeli forces.

Some examples:

● The conflict in the Middle East has been a major concern of the UN. In 1948, the first Israel-Arab war ended with a truce called for by the Security Council. In 1949, armistice agreements between Israel and four Arab States were concluded under the auspices of a UN mediator. In 1956, and again in 1973, a UN Emergency Force (UNEF) was dispatched to the area to help restore peace after outbreaks of hostilities.

The UN forces are composed of military contingents from Member States. The first UNEF was organized in the Suez crisis, under resolutions of the General Assembly; that Force, stationed entirely on Egyptian territory with the consent of the Government, was withdrawn in May 1967 at the request of Egypt. The Force dispatched in 1973 operated under mandates of the Security Council.

The Council has established peace-keeping operations in other sectors of the Middle East as the needs arose. A UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), set up in 1974, patrols an area of separation in the Israel-Syria sector. In March 1978, the Security Council created a UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to bring about the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from southern Lebanon and to help the Lebanese Government re-establish its authority in the area.

Also under the Council's mandate is the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)—composed of military observers. UNTSO has been on duty in the area for 30 years, carrying out a variety of assignments entrusted to it by the Security Council such as the supervision of the armistice agreements when they were in force. The military observers of UNTSO are now assisting the peace-keeping forces in the Middle East in the performance of their tasks.

Simultaneously with its peace-keeping activities, the UN has undertaken continuous efforts to find a peaceful solution to the political problems underlying the conflict in the Middle East. In November 1967, the Security Council adopted resolution 242 (1967) which set forth the principles for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

● Soon after the former Belgian colony of the Congo (now Zaire) become independent in 1960, the new Government called for UN military assistance in the face of disorders and the return of Belgian troops. The Security Council responded promptly. Within 48 hours, UN troops began to arrive in the Congo. Civilian experts also were rushed to the area to operate essential public services. The UN operation in the Congo protected the country from outside interference, helped maintain law and order and preserved the country's territorial unity in the face of externally inspired attempts at secession. The Force remained until 1964.

● Originally intended to remain only three months when it was set up in 1964, the UN Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus was given the task of preventing the recurrence of fighting between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, preserving law and order and promoting a return to normal conditions. The Force now totals about 2,500 officers and men from eight countries. It supervises the cease-fire between the Cyprus National Guard and the armed forces of Turkey, supports humanitarian activities and looks after the welfare and safety of Greek Cypriots in the northern part of the island. Talks between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities have been arranged under the auspices of the Secretary-General, but the search for a permanent solution has been slow and the Security Council has found it necessary to keep the Force on duty.

● A UN commission and observer group were instrumental in halting hostilities between India and Pakistan in Kashmir in 1948-1949. UN observers are still in Kashmir to observe and report on the maintenance of the cease-fire in that area.

● Unlike the peace-keeping operations mentioned above, the UN Command in Korea led the forces that fought under the UN flag in what has been described as a collective military enforcement action. At the request of the Security Council in June 1950 (the Soviet Union was absent from the Council in that period), 16 nations sent troops in response to complaints of aggression against South Korea by North Korean forces. Fighting continued until July 1953, when an armistice was signed. Unification of Korea by peaceful means has remained a UN objective. In 1979 the Secretary-General visited both parts of Korea where he held talks with leaders.

● The Secretary-General has played an important role in the maintenance of peace, sometimes personally, and other times through his special representative. In some instances, as in the continuing problems of the Middle East and Cyprus, he has responded to specific requests by the Security Council. In others, he has acted in the exercise of his good offices at the request of the parties to a dispute or on his own initiative. For example, the Secretary-General assisted in averting a threat to peace concerning Cuba (1962) and, with the help of his special representative, he secured a cease-fire in the Dominican Republic (1965) and played an important role in restoring peaceful relations between Iran and Iraq (1974). He also used his good offices to resolve a dispute between the United Kingdom and Iran over Bahrain and dispatched a special representative who found that the people of the territory wanted independence; both sides accepted this finding (1970). Through quiet diplomacy and the exercise of his good offices, the Secretary-General has continued to provide an effective means by which parties to a dispute may be helped to resolve their problems, discreetly and before they reach a point of confrontation.

● The UN also seeks constantly to halt the arms race and reduce and eventually eliminate the weapons of war. It has been a permanent forum for disarmament negotiations, generating ideas and recommendations and initiating studies on effects of nuclear and chemical and biological weapons and the economic aspects of disarmament.

Disarmament negotiations have been held bilaterally and through international bodies such as the Committee on Disarmament which meets regularly in Geneva. As a result of this work, with the constant urging of the General Assembly, a number of treaties have been concluded: the Moscow Treaty (1963) bans nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water... the Outer Space Treaty (1966) bans nuclear weapons from outer space and prohibits claims of national sovereignty in space... the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (1967) created a nuclear-free zone...the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968) committed nuclear Powers signing it not to transfer weapons to others; the non-nuclear-weapon States undertake not to receive or manufacture such weapons.

Self-determination and independence for all is an important UN goal. Youngsters in Rwanda, former Trust Territory, celebrate their country's attainment of independence.

Nations have often sought UN assistance in humanitarian causes—ranging from providing adequate food for children to caring for refugees and helping to rebuild disaster-stricken areas.

UN diplomacy means not only committee meetings but informal gatherings of ambassadors. Whether in the corridors or in meeting rooms, contacts of delegations help to resolve disputes and settle problems. (Above, scene in the Delegates' Lounge.)

Development, production and stockpiling of biological weapons were banned under another treaty in 1971. This was the first treaty in modern times to provide for the elimination of existing weapons. Emplacement of nuclear weapons on the sea-bed was banned by a treaty approved in 1970. The Soviet-United States agreements limiting strategic arms (1972 and 1979) resulted from talks begun in 1969 after the Assembly urged such negotiations. These talks are to continue.

The need to help stop the arms race led the General Assembly to hold a special session in May-June 1978 devoted entirely to disarmament. When calling for the historic session, the Assembly stated that the arms race "endangers international peace and security and also diverts vast resources urgently needed for economic and social development". At the session's end, the Assembly approved a Declaration and Programme of Action which set forth principles and objectives and strengthened international negotiating machinery for putting them into effect. Objectives include agreement on a comprehensive nuclear test ban and expanded measures to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

for justice...

The Charter goals of justice and equal rights, for individuals and for peoples, have been pursued by the UN from its early days. As one of its first tasks, the UN formulated the first Universal Declaration of Human Rights—an historic proclamation of the basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which men and women everywhere are entitled. The right to life, liberty, privacy, nationality... freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of opinion and expression... the right to work, to be educated, to take part in government: these are only some of the rights spelled out in the Declaration, which has been incorporated or reflected in the constitutions of a number of countries.

The Declaration was adopted by the General Assembly on 10 December 1948, a date commemorated each year as Human Rights Day. This document remains the guiding standard, but the work did not end there. Two international Covenants which amplify and put into binding legal form the human rights set forth in the Declaration came into force in 1976. The Covenants, one on economic, social and cultural rights and the other on civil and political rights, also provide measures to check on complaints of rights violations.

Many international conventions, by which nations commit themselves to ensure particular rights, have been concluded under the auspices of the UN and its agencies. These include conventions on genocide, political rights of women and elimination of all racial discrimination.

The Secretary-General, too, plays a role in efforts to ensure protection of human rights, through public appeals to Governments on humanitarian grounds and his use of "quiet diplomacy".

Self-determination, the right of peoples to govern themselves and choose their own way of life, was a goal when the Charter was signed; today it is a fact in most of the lands formerly under colonial rule. The Trusteeship System has already achieved its aims in all but one of the Trust Territories, and scores of other former colonies in Africa and Asia have gained their independence and joined the UN. The UN has constantly encouraged the aspirations of the peoples under foreign administration, and pressed for self-determination.

The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, adopted by the Assembly in 1960, solemnly proclaimed the necessity of bringing a speedy end to colonialism and all practices of segregation and discrimination. It called for immediate steps to transfer all powers to the people of all colonial territories.

Today the last stronghold of minority and foreign domination in the world is in southern Africa; through various actions, the UN lends its support to the cause of national liberation movements.

South Africa's *apartheid* (racial segregation) system, denounced by the General Assembly as "a crime against humanity", has been the target of a sustained campaign, involving methods from a Security Council-imposed arms embargo to a boycott of segregated sports events. A UN Special Committee against *Apartheid* constantly focuses world attention on the problem.

The Security Council also has demanded that South Africa withdraw from Namibia, the vast territory for which the UN assumed direct responsibility when the General Assembly revoked South Africa's mandate there in 1966. Since that time continuous efforts have been made to achieve Namibia's independence through free elections under UN control and supervision.

The ending of Portuguese rule over territories including Angola and Mozambique was another UN objective, reached in the mid-1970s. And in Southern Rhodesia, where a minority régime rebelled against the United Kingdom in 1965, UN action to obtain majority rule has included a Security Council order to all nations to stop trading with that régime. The economic sanctions, the first ever ordered by the Council, have been heeded by most nations, but totally disregarded by South Africa.

The UN also has made important contributions towards expanding the rule of law among nations. The International Court of Justice has assisted countries in solving a number of legal disputes, and has issued important advisory opinions on UN activities. But the Court would do much more—if the nations were more willing to bring their disputes before it.

Many conventions and treaties to regulate international conduct have been concluded under UN auspices. Efforts to codify the law of nations are carried out by the International Law Commission and by a Commission on International Trade Law. Another special UN body elaborated the principles of international law concerning friendly relations and co-operation among States.

Through its Conference on the Law of the Sea, the UN is currently working on a comprehensive legal instrument that would break new ground in international law.

for progress...

A major part of UN work—measured in terms of money and personnel involved—goes into the varied programmes aimed at achieving a better life for all people of the world. The Charter states that conditions of stability and well-being are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations. The General Assembly has stressed the urgent need to reshape international economic relations if developing countries—where 70 per cent of the world's people live but which account for only 30 per cent of the world's income—are to take their just place in the global economic system. For the first time in history most nations now accept the idea that such inequality must not be allowed to continue and that rich and poor nations should co-operate to improve the lives of all people.

The International Development Strategy for the Second UN Development Decade (the 1970s), approved by the General Assembly in 1970, stressed the need for more equitable distribution of income and wealth to promote social justice and efficiency of production. Among other goals, the Strategy sought greater financial resources for developing countries. It stated that each advanced country should transfer annually to the developing world resources amounting to at least 1 per cent of its gross national product. While some advances have been achieved, reviews of progress show that over-all targets set for the decade have not been met and much remains to be done.

It was at a special session in April-May 1974 that the General Assembly declared the international economic order itself must be changed or the gap between developed and developing countries would continue to widen. The Assembly adopted a Declaration and a Programme of Action calling for the establishment of a new international economic order, based on equity, sovereign equality, interdependence, common interest and co-operation among all States, which would eliminate inequalities and ensure development. Such a change would require the industrial countries to make adjustments in their policies to benefit the poorer countries, which in turn would take steps to promote collective self-reliance and co-operation among themselves.

The Action Programme sets out a series of specific measures relating to problems of primary commodities and raw materials, trade, restrictive business practices, industrial production, international monetary reform and the transfer of science and technology, among many others. The Assembly convened another special session in 1975 and laid down measures that provided a framework for concrete negotiations in such areas as international trade, financing for development, and food and agriculture. In 1978 the Assembly stated that the new strategy for the Third Development Decade (the 1980s) should be an integral part of efforts to establish the new international economic order.

The UN helps the developing countries to exploit untapped resources, fully employ their manpower and make use of modern science and technology.

On the front line of the struggle to promote social and economic progress is the UN Development Programme (UNDP). In co-operation with 26 UN-related agencies and institutions and the regional commissions, UNDP works with the Governments of developing nations in carrying out high-priority development projects. It is the world's largest single source of multinational technical co-operation aid, carrying out projects which help the countries to attract capital investment needed for rapid progress and to use all available resources as effectively as possible.

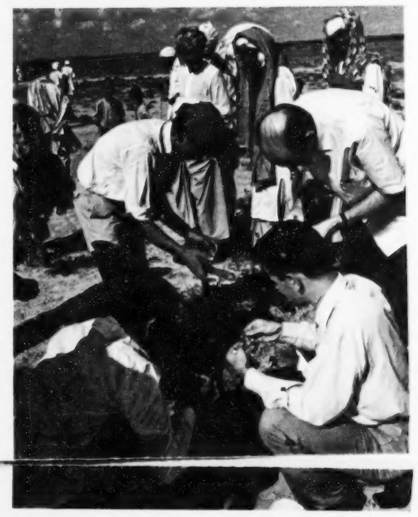
UNDP supports about 3,500 projects each year in some 151 countries and territories. These countries pay a little over half the costs involved. The results have been noteworthy: almost $30,000 million in follow-up investment have been directly or indirectly stimulated; minerals of an estimated gross value of $45,000 million have been discovered during the past 17 years; and millions of men and women have been provided with vitally needed productive skills—ranging from agricultural and industrial technicians to educators and medical personnel.

Among the agencies established by the General Assembly whose current work is often linked to development projects is the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). Set up in 1946 as an emergency operation to assist children victimized by the Second World War, UNICEF's work was later redirected to help the developing countries improve child health, nutrition and education.

At any given time there are thousands of UN experts in the field all over the world, helping to apply their special know-how to national and regional problems.

When countries are stricken by natural disasters or confronted with other emergency situations, the UN often plays an important role in helping to provide humanitarian aid—to feed and house refugees or to rebuild from the ruins caused by floods, earthquakes or conflict. Part of this aid is in the form of direct assistance from the UN and its agencies such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (a joint operation of the UN and the Food and Agriculture Organization). The UN, with its Office of Disaster Relief, also serves as a channel and co-ordinator of international contributions in such emergencies.

A multinational UN geological survey team at work in Ethiopia. Discovering new mineral and energy resources is one of many activities aided by the UN.



Modern technology can speed the progress of developing countries. Work of soil scientists in Pakistan, aided by the UN, will help in planning irrigation, conservation, land settlement.

The largest relief operation since the aftermath of the Second World War, costing millions of dollars contributed by Member States and UN bodies, related to Bangladesh; it aimed at the rehabilitation of millions of refugees who had fled their homes in the 1971 India-Pakistan conflict, and at the reconstruction of the country's economy.

In Africa, the situation in the drought-stricken Sahel region, where millions were afflicted by famine, has spurred intense, ongoing efforts by the UN system to help provide and co-ordinate emergency relief and combat the long-range effects of drought.

In July 1979 the grave and continuing refugee crisis in South-East Asia brought 65 nations to Geneva for a meeting convened by the Secretary-General to seek solutions urgently in a non-political and humanitarian spirit. At the meeting commitments were made for further places of resettlement, for the establishment of refugee centres to provide greatly needed transit areas pending resettlement, and for contributions to UNHCR's aid programme for these refugees.

The specialized agencies and other UN bodies promote global co-operation in their continuous work towards expanding education... increasing food production... fighting disease... improving the lot of working men and women... spurring world trade and helping developing countries to build industries... improving weather communications and postal services as well as co-operation in shipping and aviation... lending or investing billions of dollars for development... balancing the world's currencies... stopping illicit narcotics traffic... helping countries to carry out their population policies.

The ongoing efforts to ensure the peaceful and beneficial use of outer space, the seas and atomic energy were undreamed of when the UN was founded. The UN also took a leading role in focusing world concern on the growing threat to the environment by establishing in 1972 the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), whose headquarters are in Nairobi, Kenya. Current UNEP projects deal with marine pollution, stopping the spread of deserts, and the ecology of rural and urban settlements, among others.

Also located in Nairobi, because of its close links with UNEP, is Habitat, the UN centre concerned with housing, settlements and related environmental planning.

Major UN world conferences in the 1970s dealt with the environment, the world's food supply, the rapid growth of population, the law of the sea, the status of women, housing and settlements, trade and development, and water resources.

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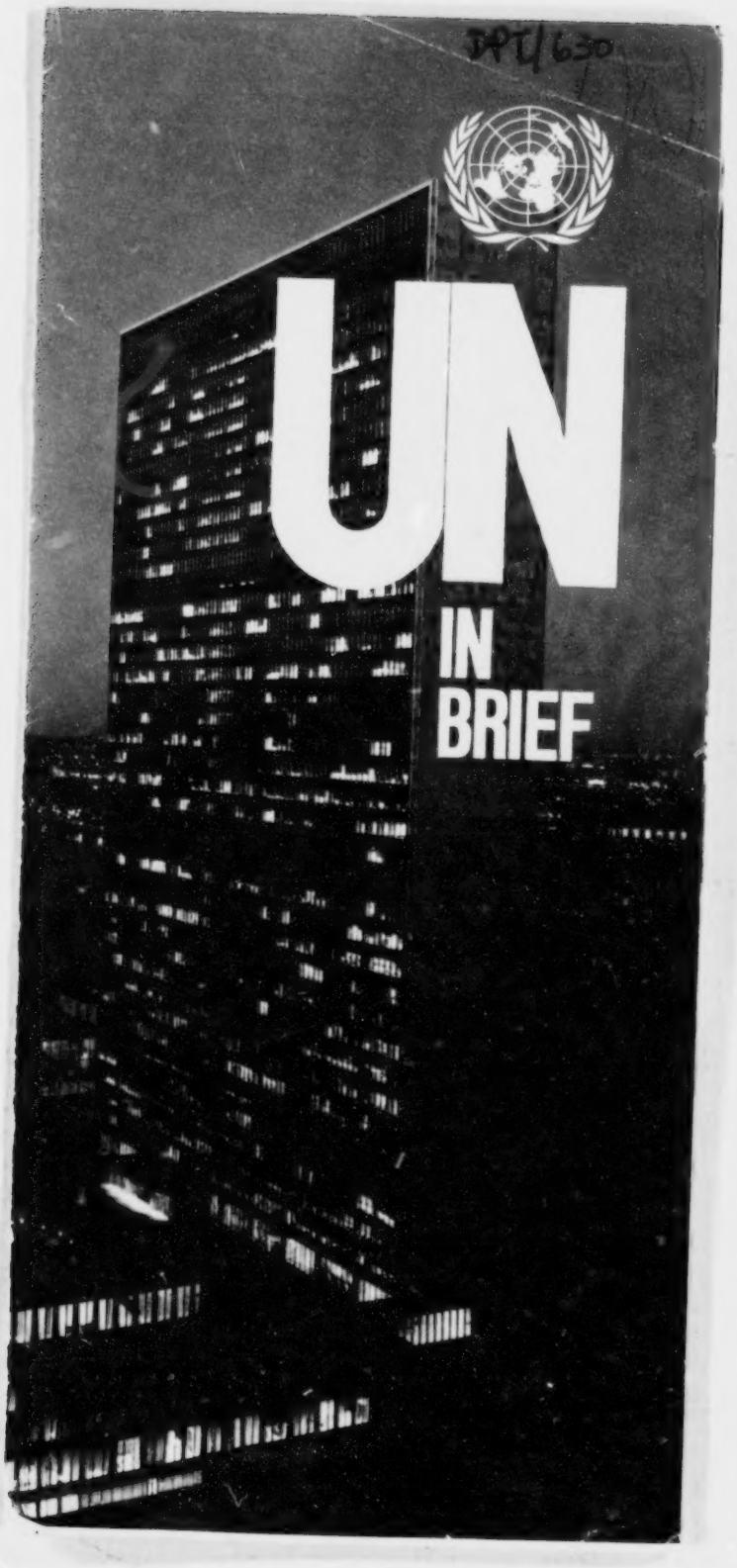

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The General Assembly Hall, where all Member States of the United Nations meet annually.

Did You Know...

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- In terms of population, the largest UN Member is China (975 million), and the smallest, Seychelles (60,000). No matter the size, each Member has one vote.

- UN Day is celebrated each year on 24 October because on that day in 1945 the Charter came into force.

- The first site of the UN Secretariat was at Church House in London, and the first General Assembly meeting was at Central Hall, Westminster. In 1946, New York was chosen as the Headquarters location.

- Nearly one million people visit Headquarters each year. Guided tours are given and most meetings are open to the public.

- More than 70 of the UN Members were territories under colonial rule when the UN was founded. The UN helped many of them to achieve independence.

- Oldest members of the UN family of organizations are the International Telecommunication Union (established in 1865) and the Universal Postal Union (1875). Other specialized agencies formed before the UN came into being but later affiliated: the International Labour Organisation (1919) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (1945).

- The largest military force organized under direct command of the UN was the Congo Force, which at its peak had over 20,000 men. Current UN peace-keeping operations include two Forces in the Middle East—in the Golan Heights and Lebanon—and a 2,500-man unit on the island of Cyprus. Between 1973 and 1979 there was a third Force in the Middle East—UNEF—which was stationed in the Sinai.

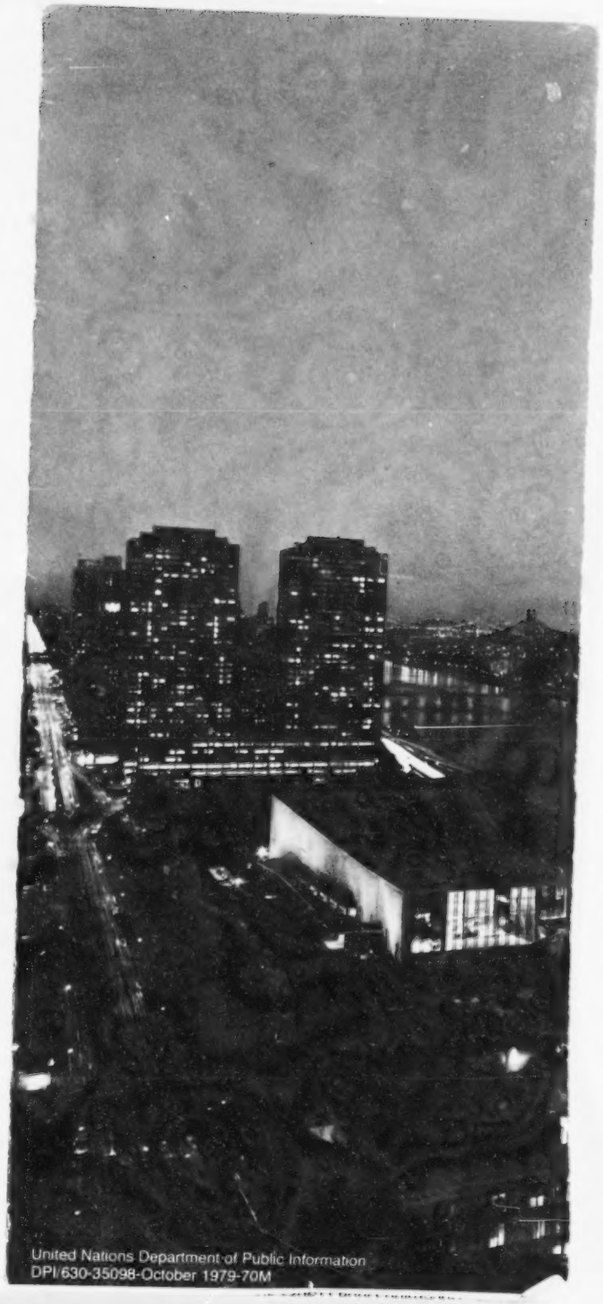
- UN technical assistance to developing countries began in 1948 with an appropriation of $350,000. Today UNDP alone provides some $450 million a year for development.

- The UN regular budget is paid by assessed contributions. But most of its assistance programmes are funded through voluntary contributions.

- The first mandatory UN trade embargo was imposed by the Security Council in 1966 against Southern Rhodesia, and, as later expanded, remains in effect.

- In the Middle East, refugees and displaced persons have been aided since 1949 by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

- The General Assembly has called for the establishment of a new international economic order, based on equality, justice and interdependence, which would eliminate the widening gap between developed and developing countries.



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Goals of the UN

The United Nations Charter sets forth the purposes of the United Nations as follows:

To maintain international peace and security, through effective collective measures and through peaceful settlement of disputes;

To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples;

To achieve co-operation in solving international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems, and in promoting human rights for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion; and

To be a centre for harmonizing the action of nations in achieving these ends.

Basic principles of the United Nations include these:

All Members are sovereign and equal.

All are pledged to settle their international disputes by peaceful means.

No Member shall use, or threaten to use, force against the territory or political independence of any State.

All are committed to assist the United Nations in any action taken in accordance with the Charter.

The United Nations shall not intervene in matters essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State, except when it is acting to enforce international peace.

"The United Nations is an instrument of peace. As long as the Member States are ready to use this instrument, it can work."

—Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim

"WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS..." These are the opening words of the United Nations Charter, signed at San Francisco in 1945. In the name of their peoples, 51 nations founded the world Organization. Since that time, more than 100 other countries have joined the United Nations.

Today "we the peoples" means the billions living in nearly all countries in the world — united in a common resolve to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and to co-operate in the search for peace, justice and progress.

How the UN Works

The UN is an organization of sovereign nations—not a world government. It provides the machinery to help find solutions to disputes or problems, and to deal with virtually any matter of concern to humanity in general.

It does not legislate, in the sense of enacting laws that nations must accept. But in the meeting rooms and corridors of the UN, representatives of most countries of the world—great and small, rich and poor, with varying political views and social systems—have a voice and vote in shaping policies of the international community on a broad range of issues.

When the UN machinery is used as the Charter intended, the results are not mere words: treaties or covenants are concluded in some cases, agreements often are reached on a common course of action and agreed policies are then carried out by the Member States or by the UN itself (through such means as mediation or peace-keeping, economic advice or development aid).

There are six main organs of the UN—the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice and the Secretariat. All are based at UN Headquarters in New York, except the Court (located at The Hague). While Headquarters is the diplomatic crossroads of the world, the "UN family" of organizations, programmes and staff are at work in every part of the world.

The GENERAL ASSEMBLY, sometimes called the nearest thing to a parliament of mankind, is the main deliberative organ. All Members are represented in it. and each has one vote. Decisions on ordinary matters are by a simple majority. In votes on important questions, a two-thirds majority is required.

The Assembly holds its regular session from mid-September to mid-December each year. Special or emergency sessions are held when necessary (and on a number of occasions the Assembly has proved it can work fast in an emergency). Even when not in session, its work goes on in special committees concerned with specific topics, and in the activities of separate bodies set up to deal with matters such as trade and development, industrialization, environment and many others.

The Assembly has the right to discuss and make recommendations on all matters within the scope of the Charter. It has no power to compel action by any Government, but its recommendations carry the weight of world opinion. When the Security Council cannot act on a threat to peace because of a "veto", the Assembly can act on the problem. In addition, the Assembly sets policies and determines programmes for the UN Secretariat. It guides activities and establishes goals for development, calls for world conferences on major issues, designates international years such as the Women's Year or the Year of the Child to focus attention on a particular sector of human society where reform is urgent. It also examines and makes recommendations on problems as diverse as the observance of human rights and the dangers of weapons of mass destruction.

Occupying a central position in the UN, the Assembly receives reports from all other organs, admits new Members, approves the budget, appoints the Secretary-General and elects members of other bodies.

The organ to which the Charter gives primary responsibility for maintaining peace and security is the SECURITY COUNCIL. It holds itself in readiness to meet at any time whenever peace is threatened. Member States are obliged to carry out its decisions.

The Council has 15 members. Five of these (China, France, Soviet Union, United Kingdom and United States) are permanent members. The others are elected by the Assembly for two-year terms. Decisions require nine votes; except in votes on procedural questions, a decision cannot be taken if there is a "no" vote by a permanent member (known as the "veto").

When a threat to peace is brought before the Council, it usually first asks the parties to reach agreement by peaceful means. In some cases, the Council requests the Secretary-General to investigate and report on a situation. It may itself undertake investigation and mediation or set forth principles for a settlement. When fighting breaks out, the Council tries to secure a cease-fire. It has the power to enforce its decisions by ordering collective military action or economic sanctions. It may send peace-keeping units (observers or military contingents) to troubled areas to reduce tensions and keep opposing forces apart.

Security Council members often try to reach a consensus in private negotiations, so that agreed decisions can be taken if possible.

Duties of the Council include recommending to the Assembly a candidate for Secretary-General and proposing countries for admission to the UN.

Working under the authority of the General Assembly, the ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL seeks to build a world of greater prosperity, stability and justice. It co-ordinates the economic and social work of the UN and the related specialized agencies and institutions—known as the UN family of organizations.

The Council has 54 members. It generally holds two month-long sessions each year, in New York and Geneva.

Economic and social concerns account for a major share of UN activities—and the UN's range of activities has multiplied dramatically since 1945, especially in response to the needs of the developing countries. The Council is called upon to make recommendations and guide activities aimed at spurring world trade, encouraging economic growth of the developing countries, assuring the observance of human rights, improving the status of women, ending discrimination against minorities, securing the better use of natural resources and energy, spreading the benefits of science and technology, administering UN aid programmes, and promoting world co-operation in areas such as better housing, family planning or prevention of crime. In a number of these fields, Council committees and subsidiary commissions study the problems and submit recommendations to the Council.

UN regional commissions aimed at fostering economic and social co-operation in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and Western Asia report to the Council, which also consults with a number of non-governmental organizations working in related fields.

The TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL was established to ensure that Governments responsible for administration of Trust Territories (most of which were in Africa) took adequate steps to prepare them for self-government or independence. On several occasions, the UN has supervised plebiscites or elections in the Territories to determine their future status.

The Council, which now has five members, is the only organ whose activities have diminished over the years. The aims of the Trusteeship System have been fulfilled to such an extent that only one of the original 11 trusteeships now remains—the Pacific Islands (administered by the United States). All other Trust Territories attained the goals of self-government or independence, either as separate States or by joining neighbouring independent countries, following the period of Trusteeship Council supervision.

Other territories not placed under the Trusteeship System have been the concern of a 24-member Special Committee set up by the Assembly to press for an end to colonial rule everywhere.

The INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE, which consists of 15 judges elected by the General Assembly and the Security Council, sits at The Hague, Netherlands.

Peaceful settlement of disputes in conformity with principles of justice and international law, as called for under the Charter—this is the purpose of the Court. Recourse to international justice, however, is optional. If a country does not wish to take part in a proceeding before the Court, it does not have to do so (unless required by special treaty provisions). But if it consents to become a party in a case, it is obligated to comply with the Court's decision.

Nations may declare in advance that they will accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court in legal disputes, but less than half of the UN members have done so. A number of treaties require States to accept the Court's jurisdiction in certain disputes.

In addition to deciding "contentious cases", the Court gives advisory opinions on legal questions at the request of UN bodies.

The SECRETARIAT works for the other organs of the UN and administers the programmes and policies laid down by them. At its head is the Secretary-General. As one of his many functions, he may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which, in his opinion, threatens international peace and security.

The Secretariat, an international staff working at Headquarters and in the field all over the world, carries out the day-to-day work of the UN. Staff members are drawn from more than 130 countries. As international civil servants, they work for the UN as a whole; each takes an oath not to seek or receive instructions from any Government or outside authority.

The work of the Secretary-General and the staff is as varied as the problems dealt with by the UN.